



Remote Workforce Considerations due to Coronavirus

The Great Lakes region is considered to be the safest part of the nation in terms of natural disasters. Wildfires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes are thankfully rare events. That said, we still have our fair share of heavy snow, rain, and power outages that make getting to the office treacherous, if not impossible.

As concerns have grown over the potential for the Coronavirus outbreak to impact the workplace, we would like to take a moment to review business continuity options available to your organization and to provide you with some immediate steps that should be taken to ensure your company is ready to support remote work.

The technical platform and support is only part of a successful remote work / business continuity plan. These plans, documented, tested, and updated regularly, ensure that there is clear communication and accountability when a disaster is declared. Should work from home, or general business continuity plans need to be implemented, there are several core items that should already be documented:

1. Who on your team is responsible (and permitted) to declare an emergency?
2. Who is responsible for coordinating with Ashton on technical matters?
3. Who is responsible for communicating with your internal team?
4. By what means will you communicate with your team? Mobile phone calls? Text? Email? Who has these phone numbers and email addresses?

How does it work, technically?

Cloud based solutions for email and line of business applications make work from home policies much easier to implement and support. Combined with SSL VPNs and remote desktop access, most organizations can provide their team with secure remote access to corporate resources.

Ashton already operates in this manner. As an example, our core systems are hosted in a secure, FEMA rated data center, and the Ashton team routinely tests our continuity plans by working from home. We leverage Microsoft Teams for both text chat and video conferencing to stay in touch throughout the day, and our phone system allows us to answer calls no matter where we are. Our remote access policy gets stress tested

regularly to help us fine tune our operations, and our policies and procedures are updated accordingly. This ensures continuity of operations, regardless of the situation.

Preparation

The concern over Coronavirus has become an impetus for many organizations to implement remote access policies, or to update existing ones. In order to minimize the stress and maximize productivity, we recommend taking the following steps to prepare your organization for a short term disruption:

1. Contact Ashton to discuss the technical requirements for remote access, and how we can best assist in preparing your organization.
2. Focus your immediate efforts on communication, and chain of command: who is responsible for coordination and communication?
3. Determine what core systems must be accessible.
4. Determine what core staff need to be prioritized in terms of access and support.

The goal of having a plan is to reduce stress, ambiguity, and anxiety in the event of a disaster and to ensure that core business functions continue to operate. These steps are designed to help you start the planning process. Every organization is unique, and a full business continuity plan involves far more than the items outlined above. We can help.

For Geauga companies: If your business has ten or more technology users and need to plan for remote work, please contact Ashton Technology Solutions via email to both Travis Grundke tgrundke@ashtonsolutions.com **and** Jim Abbott jabbott@ashtonsolutions.com.

Please prepare the following prior to contacting Ashton Technology Solutions:

- 1) A brief overview of your network (how many users and servers)
- 2) What are your remote needs and/or hopes?
- 3) How would your business be impacted if you/your workforce cannot work remotely?
- 4) Are you requiring employees to work remotely, or is it optional?

Clients under managed services agreements are currently being serviced, and the Ashton team will do their best to assist you in a timely fashion.